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New York

President:	Mr. Ohin	(Togo)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Karev
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

Letter dated 18 January 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2012/45)

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12-24250 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

Letter dated 18 January 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2012/45)

The President (*spoke in French*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Benin, the Congo and Nigeria to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Issifou Kogui N'Douro, Minister of State in Charge of National Defence of Benin.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of Procedure, I invite Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Abdel Fatau Musah, special representative of the Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States Commission, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Her Excellency Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2012/45, which contains a letter dated 18 January 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the report of the United Nations assessment mission on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

I now give the floor to Mr. Pascoe.

Mr. Pascoe: I appreciate this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the report of the mission dispatched by the Secretary-General last November to assess the threat of piracy in Benin and throughout the Gulf of Guinea.

Members of the Council will recall that, when the Secretary-General first addressed the issue of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea in the Council, in October 2011, he informed the members of his intention to dispatch a mission to the region following a request from President Boni Yayi of the Republic of Benin. The main objective of the mission was to assess the threat in Benin and in the Gulf of Guinea as a whole, to take stock of national and regional efforts being made to address the menace, and to make recommendations on how to fill the gaps that remain.

As mentioned in its report (see S/2012/45), the mission visited Benin, Nigeria, Gabon and Angola. In addition to meetings with Government and other officials in the four countries visited, the mission also held discussions with representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in Abuja, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), in Libreville, and with the Gulf of Guinea Commission, in Luanda.

Allow me to convey our deep appreciation to the Governments of Angola, Benin, Gabon and Nigeria and to ECOWAS, ECCAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission for the valuable support and cooperation extended to the assessment mission, which facilitated the smooth conduct of its work.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General last week in his remarks to the Council at the open debate on transnational organized crime in West Africa and the Sahel region (see S/PV.6717), piracy and armed robbery against ships increasingly undermine efforts by States in the Gulf of Guinea region to maintain peace, security and stability and to promote socio-economic development. The threat has become even more alarming as the pirates have become more violent. The Secretary-General recalled, in that connection, the tragic killing of the captain and the engineer of a ship that was attacked by pirates off the coast of Nigeria two weeks ago.

While regional States and organizations have carried out initiatives designed to counter piracy and armed robbery against ships at the national and regional levels, the threat not only persists but appears to be gaining ground in a region where the high-value assets the pirates target are abundant. The Secretary-General's mission found that piracy in the Gulf of

Guinea has become more systematic, with the pirates resorting to sophisticated modes of operation and utilizing heavy weapons. So far, the attacks have primarily targeted the lucrative cargo onboard the ships rather than taking hostages for ransom, which has been the practice off Somalia.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea hampers efforts by regional States to engage in peaceful international commerce and to exploit their vast natural resources for the socio-economic development of their countries. Recent reports have suggested, for instance, that Nigeria is losing an estimated 7 per cent of its oil resources to criminal activities, including piracy.

While piracy was a largely unknown phenomenon in the Gulf of Guinea 10 years ago, the number of attacks and the damage they cause has reached worrisome proportions. In 2010, 45 incidents in seven countries were reported to the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Last year, the numbers rose to 64 in nine countries. In only the first two months of 2012, the IMO has already recorded 10 incidents off the coasts of Benin, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria. In addition, we know that not all piracy incidents are systematically reported.

As highlighted in the report of the assessment mission, Gulf of Guinea countries need a united front in order to respond effectively to the growing threat of piracy along their coasts. Isolated national initiatives are only temporarily, at best, pushing the pirates to shift their criminal operations from one country to the next.

Accordingly, we would like to stress the importance of a comprehensive regional strategy, as envisaged in Security Council resolution 2018 (2011), of 31 October 2011. To that end, and as the Secretary-General reiterated in his remarks to the Council last week, the assessment mission recommended that Gulf of Guinea countries should convene a regional summit as early as possible in 2012 to develop a comprehensive anti-piracy strategy for the region. We welcome the commitments expressed recently at the ECCAS Summit held in N'Djamena in January 2012 and at the ECOWAS Summit held in Abuja two weeks ago to develop a broad regional maritime strategy.

We also welcome the measures taken collectively by Central African States, under the auspices of ECCAS, to set up a Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa, based in Pointe-Noire in the Republic of Congo, as well as multinational coordination centres, which are already operational in Angola, Cameroon and the Congo. These centres are designed to monitor maritime activities in the coastal States of Central Africa. In West Africa, ECOWAS member States have recently intensified efforts to establish a joint maritime security plan aimed at harmonizing West African maritime policies and operations. For its part, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, composed of eight members from both West and Central Africa, sees itself as a bridge to link ECOWAS and ECCAS initiatives in the field of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea region.

We see the various efforts already undertaken by West and Central African States as important building blocks that lay the foundation for the convening of the proposed joint regional anti-piracy summit in the Gulf of Guinea. While all Gulf of Guinea countries, both coastal and hinterland, are determined to counter the growing threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea, limited national and regional capacities undermine their ability to do so effectively. The resources at hand are inadequate and the region lacks a harmonized legal framework in the field of maritime security. This, in turn, can undermine effective cooperation to initiate and implement joint and timely anti-piracy activities.

We welcome the support provided by members of the international community to the Gulf of Guinea countries to strengthen their maritime security capacities. However, in the face of the deepening threat, we strongly believe that much more needs to be done. Significant logistical support is required, in particular to bolster national and regional maritime capacities. National authorities in Benin and Nigeria highlighted in their discussions with the assessment mission the need to set up a logistical facility in Benin to support the operations of the joint Benin-Nigeria maritime patrol mission. This facility would help, for example, with the refuelling and repairs of vessels used by the joint patrols. Indeed, the joint patrol was cited as a concrete example of the significant results that can be achieved when countries work together to address this transnational threat. Consequently, the assessment mission in its recommendations highlights the need to support Nigeria and Benin in maintaining the joint patrols until a more comprehensive and effective regional strategy is put in place.

The United Nations system has already begun to provide some support. IMO is assisting the 25 States

members of the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa to implement the memorandum of understanding adopted in 2008 to enhance maritime safety, security and law enforcement throughout the region. The Secretary-General discussed this issue at some length with IMO Secretary-General Koji Sekimizu in London last week. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa are working with their respective West and Central African partners to support the development of subregional maritime arrangements in preparation for the proposed joint regional summit.

During its discussions with national and regional leaders, the assessment mission found strong appreciation for the role and support of the United Nations in highlighting the need for concerted international action to counter the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. States and institutions of the region welcomed the adoption of resolution 2018 (2011), which they saw as the first major international political and legal tool in mobilizing global cooperation against the piracy menace. Building on that resolution, the assessment mission and the increased efforts of States of the region, we must take further concrete steps designed to eradicate piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, which constitutes a clear threat to the security and economic development of the States of the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

I now give the floor to I now give the floor to Mr. Musah.

Mr. Musah: I am honoured to address this body on behalf of the President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, who is unavoidably absent today, and to be able to present the point of view of ECOWAS on the disturbing matter of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The ECOWAS Commission thanks the Council for its abiding preoccupation with the growing threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea to the States in the catchment area, regional security and international maritime activity. ECOWAS is most pleased with the personal involvement of the Secretary-General in finding solutions to the piracy problem, as it will further strengthen our existing cooperation with United Nations agencies in the region.

Members may recall that, at the Council's 6633rd meeting on 19 October 2011, the ECOWAS Commission was privileged to present its views on this matter. Soon afterwards, on 31 October 2011, the Council reiterated its deep concern about the threats posed by piracy in the Gulf of Guinea by adopting resolution 2018 (2011).

Since then, unfortunately, the fragile security situation in the ECOWAS space has taken a turn for the worse due to two main developments. The first is the resurgence of rebellion and banditry, as well as worsening food insecurity, in the Sahel; and the second is growing piracy and associated illicit activities in the Gulf of Guinea. Both these developments seriously undermine the gains made in the past decade to stabilize the region and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Some observers might be tempted to think that the problem of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has peaked, wrongly judging by the fact that Benin, the most affected State in the ECOWAS space, recorded only 21 piracy incidents in 2011, compared to 45 cases in 2010. However, the rapid spread of the phenomenon to other States of the subregion gives reason for concern. For instance, a total of 18 attacks occurred in Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire last year alone, while this year one has already occurred off the coast of Ghana.

Furthermore, piracy is increasingly dovetailing into other forms of transnational organized crime, including oil-bunkering, robbery at sea, hostage-taking, human and drug trafficking, and terrorism. In a region extremely vulnerable to climate change, these associated illegal activities are exacerbating environmental degradation and injecting an incendiary element into food insecurity and intercommunal violence. Piracy is thus also encouraging corruption, the radicalization of young people and political instability, as well as maritime border disputes. The Council cannot also ignore the increasing dependence of the world economy on Gulf of Guinea oil and the danger piracy poses to that vital sea lane of commerce.

The Gulf of Guinea, as we know, is a reservoir of precious hydrocarbons and rich fauna and flora. It is projected that the region will double the production of its estimated 14-billion barrel oil reserves from 4 million barrels per day to 8 million in the next decade. Against the backdrop of the increasing dependency of littoral and landlocked States of the region on oil exports, the consequences of unchecked piracy on both their

economies and on the world economy as a whole cannot be underestimated.

To counter the dangers posed by piracy and associated crimes to maritime security, States and organizations in the catchment area have, over the past few years, embarked on national, regional and international initiatives aimed at preventing and controlling the illicit activities, while building their capabilities to strengthen maritime security.

At the national level, the littoral ECOWAS States — particularly Nigeria, Ghana, Benin and Senegal — are taking practical steps to police their waters, including the enhancement of maritime awareness capabilities, strengthening coastal fleets and boosting surveillance. In fact, approximately two weeks ago, Ghana took delivery of four high-speed boats. The reality, however, is that those efforts remain but feeble responses to the threat, as hardly any of the States concerned can boast enough maritime surveillance and force projection capability beyond 100 nautical miles off the coast.

Consequently, bilateral and multilateral maritime security cooperation has been sought to complement national efforts. As the Council is aware, Nigeria and Benin have been conducting joint patrols in their common waters under Operation Prosperity, which is ongoing. Similar operations exist between other States and international partners, such as France's roaming vessel operation off the coast of Benin and the Ghana-United Kingdom initiative on the national maritime threat information sharing centre.

At the multilateral level, the United States in particular — as well as France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Germany — have been helping to enhance regional maritime security in the ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) regions under such initiatives as the United States Africa Partnership Station, Spain's operation under the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, and the priority solidarity fund of France, Benin, Togo and Ghana.

As a consequence of those disparate initiatives, the incidence of piracy has diminished somewhat in the waters of the Gulf of Guinea. But it has by no means been rooted out. The matter is therefore being given due attention at the political and strategic levels within ECOWAS. Recent meetings of ECOWAS heads of State and of Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff have devoted much time and effort to piracy and maritime security.

The extent of concern of ECOWAS heads of State and Government about maritime security and their determination to seek a regional solution to it were reflected in the full consideration they gave to the matter at their 40th Summit, held in Abuja from 16 to 17 February. In the final communiqué, the Summit acknowledged the increasing threat posed by piracy and other forms of organized maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea and stressed the importance of the political leadership and coordinating role of ECOWAS in combating that scourge. To that end, it tasked the ECOWAS Commission to urgently develop a holistic, strategic maritime policy framework to guide future actions and cooperation, as well as to strengthen collaboration with ECCAS, the Gulf of Guinea Council and all other relevant stakeholders, with a view to confronting the challenges.

Furthermore, the summit instructed the Commission to convene an urgent meeting of the Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff to review all emerging security threats in the Sahel region and in the Gulf of Guinea and propose concrete recommendations to address them.

That level of concern at the highest level has been matched by the ECOWAS Commission, which quickly convened a sectional meeting of the Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff, held in Abuja on 24 February, to review the region's evolving strategy on maritime security. The Committee also decided to dispatch a mission to the conflict areas in the Sahel and to the littoral States to gather further inputs to enrich the regional strategy. A full meeting of the Committee is scheduled to be convened in Côte d'Ivoire in mid-March to update the strategy and to make recommendations on the anticipated broader meeting with organizations outside the ECOWAS space.

As the Council is aware, for several months now, ECOWAS, ECCAS and the Gulf of Guinea Council have been exploring modalities for joint action to combat piracy and shore up the security of international trade routes in the Gulf of Guinea. To that end, plans are afoot to convene, as soon as possible, a wider meeting of regional bodies to harmonize their various initiatives into a broader and more comprehensive regional maritime security framework,

in cooperation with the United Nations and international partners.

The need for such a cooperative approach to security in the Gulf of Guinea reflects the favoured policy and strategy of ECOWAS on the matter, namely, that piracy is a regional challenge that requires a regional maritime security architecture into which national and bilateral initiatives would dovetail. It is also dictated by the challenges confronting States and subregional organizations. Among other things, those include a lack of financial and technical capacity at the national and regional levels to effectively monitor and project force to protect their waters; a paucity of binding legal frameworks to enforce compliance with the law of the sea and to prosecute offenders; and the multiplicity and duplication of efforts due to the absence of a coordination mechanism.

Going forward, therefore, while encouraging the continuation of the ongoing limited initiatives, ECOWAS urges all parties concerned to scale up efforts, beginning with the proposed multilateral forum, to develop a more comprehensive framework that involves all parties so as to ensure a holistic approach to maritime security, in close cooperation with the United Nations. To that end, the Commission exhorts international partners to buy into the long-term perspective and to scale up their financial, logistical and technical assistance to the initiative, which aims to build and strengthen indigenous maritime security capabilities. The Commission also urges the United Nations Office for West Africa and the United Nations Office in Central Africa to facilitate and support the realization of the broader regional initiative. In such a cooperative compact lies the sustainability of our efforts; in it lies the guarantee of security in the Gulf of Guinea.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Musah for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Ukonga.

Mrs. Ukonga: Let me begin by thanking the President of the Security Council for inviting the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) to participate in the discussion on the report (see S/2012/45) of the United Nations evaluation mission sent by the Secretary-General to the Gulf of Guinea region and to the secretariats of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States and the GGC to ascertain the level of threat posed by piracy and to take stock of regional and national capacities in ensuring maritime safety and security in the region.

I would also like to convey the apologies of the Executive Secretary of the GGC for his inability to be personally present at this meeting, in spite of the personal invitation addressed to him by the Togolese presidency of the Security Council. That was due to circumstances completely beyond his control.

I would also express our congratulations to the United Nations assessment team that visited the Gulf of Guinea region for the painstaking way in which it carried out their evaluation assignment and for giving us a detailed report on their findings. The secretariat of the Gulf of Guinea Commission received the team on 24 November 2011. The report on the GGC contained a true reflection of our discussions with them. Since their visit, the Gulf of Guinea Commission has initiated action towards effecting collaboration between it and ECOWAS on matters of common interest including. Among other things, such issues include possible concerted efforts in the fight against piracy, which is currently one of the greatest threats to economic activity within the region; the issue of environmental pollution and degradation; and illegal, unauthorized and uncontrolled fishing.

The GGC has also taken steps to draft a strategy for maritime security in the region that, once it has been discussed and approved by the relevant higher authorities, will constitute our basic document for discussion and collaboration with other subregional and international organizations.

On the issue of the report that we are considering, the GGC would like to make some comments on the observations made in some portions of the report.

On the legal framework, as referred to in paragraphs 13 and 14, although the report specifically reports on what obtains in the Republic of Benin, the situation is more or less the same in many other countries of the region. The legal framework for dealing with piracy is insufficient, ineffective and different from one country to the other, ranging from the treatment of acts of piracy as minor misdemeanours in some, to conspiracy to commit theft on the high seas in others.

There is no standardized, adopted and accepted definition of pirates in the context of the region with

the result that when pirates are caught, depending on where and under what circumstances they are caught, they can escape with little or no punishment. There is therefore a need to have an accepted common definition of acts of piracy, attracting the same type of punishment in all the countries of the region, and possibly the establishment of a neutral jurisdiction that will try those arrested for acts of piracy.

What is true of piracy is also true of the legal framework for bringing to trial those caught carrying out illegal activities in other sectors. This means that there is the need to harmonize the legal texts regulating activities in these sectors and prescribing punishments for those who run afoul of the laws.

Our second comment is on the meeting of ECOWAS, ECCAS and the GGC, as noted in paragraph 44 of the report. The GGC would like to propose that the United Nations support the process of the meeting and give the meeting all the assistance it will require.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mrs. Ukonga for her statement.

I now give the floor to Council members.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Togolese presidency for convening this debate on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. I would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Pascoe, Mr. Musah, and Mrs. Ukonga for their briefings.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for dispatching a United Nations assessment mission to the Gulf of Guinea to assess the scope of the threat of piracy in the region, as well as for the comprehensive report (S/2012/45) that the mission has submitted. The findings and recommendations of the mission require careful consideration.

Incidents of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea have risen significantly in recent times, giving the area the second most acute piracy problem on the African continent. The increasing number of piracy attacks, in addition to transnational organized crime, including illicit weapons and drug trafficking, constitutes a serious threat to the peace, security and economic development of coastal and hinterland States in the region.

We note political will at the highest level in the individual States of the region and their determination to combat the threat and cooperate to that end. Measures and initiatives undertaken at the national and regional levels to mobilize international attention to this problem and to enhance maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea should be commended.

However, as the assessment mission concluded, most countries in the Gulf of Guinea cannot alone prevent or manage effectively the threat to maritime security in their coastal waters. Indeed, one of the characteristics applying to piracy proceeds from a concept of collective responsibility to fight against this form of criminality, which affects all States. It is therefore important that the States and organizations of the region be provided with substantial assistance from the international community.

Azerbaijan stresses the importance of affirming respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States of the Gulf of Guinea and their neighbours. With reference to the report of the assessment mission, we note that many States of the region are cautious as to the possibility of an international naval response in the Gulf of Guinea to prevent potential pirate attacks.

The United Nations plays an important coordinating role and should continue and intensify its engagement and work to help the States and organizations of the region to act and mobilize international support, including the convening of the joint summit of Gulf of Guinea States to develop a regional anti-piracy strategy. We agree with the mission's view that any viable or lasting regional strategy may need to take into account the root causes of the problems in the regional countries. In addition, if any comprehensive strategy is to take effect, it is essential that the countries of the region further strengthen their interaction, cooperation and coordination, as well as develop a legal framework for the prevention and repression of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, particularly for organizing and sharing this debate. I also want to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe, Mr. Abdel Fatau Musah of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Mrs. Florentina Ukonga of the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) for their briefings.

The United States believes that piracy in the Gulf of Guinea requires the strongest possible regional response with international help. That is why, since

2007, the United States has provided approximately $35 million in assistance to regional States to build maritime security capacity, including coastal radars, equipment, boats and associated training.

The United States is committed to working with our African and other international partners through programmes like the Africa Partnership Station and the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership. It is worth noting that Obangame Express 2012, a regional Gulf of Guinea maritime exercise to help local forces improve their capabilities to counter illicit maritime activities, will conclude in the coming days. This exercise includes the participation of Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo, Benin and the Republic of Congo, as well as well as non-African partners.

There can go no doubt that the situation has become more grave. The impact of maritime crime on local economies is staggering. By one estimate, the West African subregion loses $2 billion annually to maritime attacks — a high price for a region with extensive development needs and already fragile economies. Benin saw a 70 per cent decrease in the number of ships entering the Port of Cotonou following its designation as high-risk by a maritime insurance company last August. And no price can be placed on the loss of life as occurred on 13 February, when gunmen shot and killed the captain and chief engineer of a cargo ship off the coast of Nigeria.

The primary responsibility for patrolling and securing offshore areas rests, of course, with the Governments and countries of the Gulf of Guinea. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2012/45) states, there is an urgent need for these countries to develop a comprehensive anti-piracy strategy for the entire region. No country has the capacity on its own to tackle maritime crime.

Gulf of Guinea countries need to continue developing regional coordination mechanisms to address the lack of a collective surveillance system; the lack of a joint monitoring and patrolling arrangement; the absence of a sustainable process for equipping, funding and maintaining maritime infrastructure; the lack of a formalized information-gathering and exchange system; and inadequate legal frameworks. The need to address corruption and to strengthen law enforcement capabilities also cannot be overstated. The Secretary-General's report notes that it is

> "unlikely that the pilfered fuel, which subsequently resurfaces on the black market in the main ports along the Gulf of Guinea, is being stolen and distributed without the collusion of officials at the ports" (*S/2012/45, para. 9*).

Nigeria and Benin have undertaken joint patrols, as have Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe. This model should be extended to other countries of the Gulf of Guinea to ensure that the problem is fully addressed, rather than simply relocated.

Cameroon's experience offers both hope and a cautionary lesson. Thanks in part to the donation of equipment, training and materiel by partners, but in large part through its own efforts, Cameroon reduced the number of instances of maritime crime in its waters from 40 in 2009 to eight in the first eight months of 2011. That was done by focusing on the highest risk areas in its territorial waters. But while mitigating the risk within Cameroonian waters, that success appears to have caused much of the illegal activity to shift farther north and west, underscoring the need for a regional approach.

As the Council urged in resolution 2018 (2011), a summit of Gulf of Guinea Heads of State should be convened to develop a comprehensive response in the region and to encourage members of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to devise a united strategy. The international community has a role to play in supporting these national and regional efforts. We welcome the suggestion detailed in the Secretary-General's report that the United Nations play a supporting, facilitation and coordination role with respect to Gulf of Guinea piracy and maritime armed robbery, supplementing regional organizations' leading role.

Piracy and maritime armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea have threatened the economies, Governments and people of the region for far too long. National and regional political will, with the support of the international community, will be critical to long-term success in reversing this threat.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Togo for arranging this thematic debate of the Council on the question of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe; the Director of Political Affairs of the Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Musah; and the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, Mrs. Ukonga, for their briefings.

In recent years, frequent acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea have seriously threatened the normal trade and navigation security in the Gulf and negatively affected regional peace and security. They have also had an impact on the economic activities of coastal States and the neighbouring hinterland countries. China expresses its grave concern over this situation. The countries of the Gulf of Guinea, the relevant regional organizations and the international community should fully recognize the serious nature of the problem, take timely, effective, preventive and comprehensive actions, and duly solve the problem by strengthening international cooperation and preparing integrated strategies.

The Gulf of Guinea countries bear the primary responsibility for dealing with piracy. China welcomes the positive initiatives taken by the countries concerned, including the formulation and enhancement of national strategies, the strengthening of governance, naval capacities, judicial systems and law enforcement, and the deployment of joint maritime patrols. We hope that the countries concerned will continue to increase imports, strengthen coordination and do better in shouldering the responsibility for maintaining regional peace and security.

Recently, the relevant regional organizations — ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission — actively formulated an integrated regional anti-piracy strategy and established regional coordination centres that have already achieved notable results. China expresses its appreciation for the work of those organizations. We hope that the relevant regional organizations will continue to play a leadership and coordination role, convene a regional summit on preventing and combating piracy as soon as possible, and strengthen and improve their coordination mechanisms so that they can act in synergy.

The support and assistance of the international community are indispensable to addressing the question of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. China supports the relevant recommendations in the report of the assessment mission (see S/2012/45). We support the United Nations in playing a coordinating role in international cooperation to combat piracy and in providing more financial and technical support to the relevant countries and regional organizations. We call on countries with the capacities to do so to effectively address the question and, on the basis of respect for the sovereignty of the relevant countries, to provide timely and necessary assistance. The Chinese Government will continue to provide assistance within our capabilities.

The issue of piracy has a profound economic and social background. Piracy occurs at sea but its root causes are on land. Poverty and stalled economic and social development provide fertile ground for piracy. If the problem of piracy is to be solved, an integrated strategy to address the symptoms and root causes is required. We call on the international community to redouble its efforts and play a more active role in helping the countries concerned to eradicate poverty and achieve sustained economic and social development.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your initiative to convene this debate, which allows us to evaluate maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, based on the report of the United Nations assessment mission (see S/2012/45). I would also naturally like to thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing, as well as the representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission.

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea are a recent source of concern for our Council. However, African States and maritime shippers have been suffering the consequences of this situation for several years. As opposed to the situation in Somalia, acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea are usually conducted in areas near the coast and appear to be more opportunistic than planned operations. Nevertheless, their impact on the coastal States' economies is substantial, as it increases the costs of maritime trade and extractive activities. The assessment mission's report demonstrates this very clearly in the case of Benin.

Our political objective must clearly be to support the Gulf of Guinea States, which bear the primary responsibility for ensuring the security of the maritime spaces within their jurisdictions. In this

context, it is up to those same States, concerned regional organizations — ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Commission of the Gulf of Guinea — to identify a regional strategy that the United Nations can support.

In its resolution 2018 (2011) of 31 October 2011, the Council welcomed the intention of Gulf of Guinea States to convene a regional conference. In this regard, we reiterate our encouragement for that initiative. We also welcome the measures undertaken by regional organizations, in particular ECCAS and its maritime security strategy and its Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa in Pointe-Noire, the Congo. Such good practices deserve to be reviewed at the ECOWAS level. We also call on the various regional organizations to better coordinate their action and their resources so that the maritime zone of the Gulf of Guinea can be monitored in its entirety and not in a piecemeal fashion.

France is acting against maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. French naval vessels make use of their stops in the region to conduct educational and training activities. In October 2011, the authorities of Equatorial Guinea inaugurated in Bata a new regional naval school that is supported by French cooperation. France is also behind several initiatives aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea. It organized a regional seminar last November in Cotonou to take stock of the needs of States members of ECOWAS and ECCAS. Its recommendations will be implemented through a $1.6-million programme to reform the maritime security sector in Togo, Benin and Ghana. The first steps have been to underwrite an ECOWAS mission of maritime experts to Libreville and Douala last week to give them the benefit of the maritime structures put in place by ECCAS in recent years, which will facilitate cooperation between those two organizations in the future.

In its capacity as chair of the Group of Eight peacekeeping/peacebuilding experts, in 2011 France also proposed instituting a coordination mechanism among its members — including the United Nations and the European Union — to strengthen maritime security capacities so as to avoid duplication of efforts and to address a lack of training in certain areas.

The European Union is currently looking into financing the establishment of regional mechanisms for training, information-sharing and strengthening the coastguards of the Gulf of Guinea States. The European initiative SEACOP also aims to strengthen the fight against illicit maritime trafficking and to secure ports. Those efforts, however, will be effective in the long term only if they are part of a regional strategy of cooperation among the States of the Gulf of Guinea and of national policies opposing maritime crime, including corruption, as the report of the assessment mission makes clear. The Security Council, the coastal States and the international donors each have a role to play.

We hope that the Secretary-General will continue to keep us informed on the situation in the Gulf of Guinea. We will read with great attention forthcoming reports from the United Nations regional offices in Dakar and Libreville.

We thank Togo for the draft resolution it has distributed and which is currently under discussion. We give it our full support and hope for a prompt adoption.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): We thank the delegation of Togo for organizing this meeting on an issue of key importance to the States of West and Central Africa. Our thanks also go to Mr. Lynn Pascoe for his briefing on the situation of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. We are also grateful to Mr. Abdel Fatau Musah and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, representing the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, respectively.

We appreciate the initiative of the Secretary-General in deploying the assessment mission to study the threat arising from acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. We have carefully read its report (see S/2012/45) and believe that it contains useful recommendations for dealing with that threat.

Pakistan staunchly supports a comprehensive approach against maritime piracy. We have been playing an active role in the fight against piracy by contributing our warships to anti-piracy patrolling off the coast of Somalia since 2009. Increasing piracy in the Gulf of Guinea threatens the economic well-being of several countries of that region. According to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), there were 58 attacks in the region during the first 10 months of 2011, of which 21 occurred off the coast of Benin — a nation whose economy relies overwhelmingly on port activities. According to the report of the assessment

mission, piracy is causing an estimated annual loss of $2 billion to the West African subregion's economy.

Also worrisome are indications of links between piracy and other forms of organized crime, such as oil bunkering and drug trafficking. If left unchecked, such organized crime can further undermine governance and economic development in the affected countries. The climate of insecurity would discourage investments particularly, in the offshore oil sector. We therefore fully sympathize with and understand the concern of the affected countries for taking urgent action to address the situation.

Acting within their existing resources, the States of the region have taken several initiatives to counter piracy, but progress has been hampered by lack of capacity. For example Operation Prosperity between Nigeria and Benin is costing Benin $466,000 per month, which, although it is only 5 per cent of the entire cost of the operation, is unsustainable. Other countries of the region simply lack the capacity and the financial wherewithal to undertake this fight effectively.

The eradication of piracy in a region the size of the Gulf of Guinea cannot be accomplished without a cooperative and collaborative approach involving the countries of the region and international partners. In our view, such an approach may consist of the following elements.

First, there is a need to develop a comprehensive regional strategy to counter piracy specific to the circumstances of the Gulf of Guinea. In this regard, the early convening of the summit of Gulf of Guinea Heads of State would be critical. The strategy needs to take into account strengthening the legal framework at the national and regional levels for criminalizing acts of piracy and prosecuting and punishing persons engaged in such acts; developing mechanisms for cooperation among the respective law enforcement agencies; establishing collective systems for surveillance, information-sharing and joint patrolling in the Gulf of Guinea; addressing links between piracy and other forms of organized crime; and addressing the underlying causes of piracy.

Secondly, pending the formulation of a comprehensive strategy, States of the region must consider interim measures to enhance cooperative action in countering piracy. Thirdly, fighting piracy at sea is a high-cost proposition for which countries of the region need the capacity-building support of international partners. Fourthly, the United Nations and the IMO should assist the countries of the region in synergizing their efforts through the development of a comprehensive regional strategy and making it operational by mobilizing resources and providing technical assistance. Fifthly, in implementing counter-piracy measures, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States of the region must be respected.

Finally, in view of the experience of fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia, we would like to underline the importance of taking effective measures urgently to counter piracy in the Gulf of Guinea in order to prevent the situation from getting out of hand. We therefore support the draft resolution under consideration by the Council.

Mr. Cabral (Portugal): I thank the Togolese presidency for giving us another opportunity to further our understanding of the phenomenon of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, and to discuss what we can collectively do to deal with that threat to regional peace and stability. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his presentation and for highlighting the main findings of the assessment mission report (see S/2012/45). I also welcome the representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission and thank them for their statements.

Portugal sees the problem of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea as a ramification of the wider threat of transnational organized crime in West Africa, which we had the opportunity to discuss last week (see S/PV.6717). As we mentioned then, piracy is linked to other forms of organized crime and benefits from existing criminal networks and their resources.

As the report highlights, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is not a new phenomenon, but has in recent years become more frequent, more sophisticated in its techniques and more violent. Its effects are felt much beyond the purely security realm, as it disrupts trade and economic activities vital to coastal States. West African economies have reportedly lost about $2 billion of annual revenue as a result of piracy. Benin in particular has seen its shipping activities decline by 70 per cent as a result of attacks in the past two years. Most importantly, piracy affects countries with very different levels of institutional capacity to deal with the problem, and cannot be solved through isolated

measures by each individual State. Therefore, we fully share the central recommendation of the report, namely, the need for a region-wide strategy to fight piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, based first and foremost on the efforts of regional bodies. The political will expressed by the leaders of ECOWAS to work together with the Gulf of Guinea Commission countries and to harmonize their anti-piracy policies is a very encouraging sign. We look forward to the outcome of the planned summit to bring together all the States of the Gulf of Guinea.

Let me add a few thoughts on the role of the international community, and of the United Nations in particular, in contributing to regional efforts.

It is very positive that a number of regional organizations, including ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), as well as the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Maritime Organization for West and Central Africa, are paying attention to and addressing the problem of piracy. To be effective, those different efforts must be coordinated, while fully respecting each organization's particular area of competence. The United Nations can play a central role in ensuring the coherence and overall coordination of those initiatives, as well as in mobilizing international assistance to build the capacity of regional organizations in crucial areas such as surveillance, patrolling and information sharing.

We should also try to make good use of existing mechanisms. For example, the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse is a reference framework for initiatives in that area, and it could be enlarged in order to include the threat of piracy. The West Africa Coast Initiative, which encourages the pooling of national knowledge and resources, could also add the issue of piracy to its areas of activity. The same applies to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Programme for West Africa. Best practices from individual countries and bilateral assistance programmes already in place should be shared with regional partners.

International assistance can also be instrumental in helping individual countries and regional organizations to adapt their legal frameworks to enable them to deal more effectively with the changing nature of the threats to security and stability. The creation of regional judicial institutions to deal with the issue of piracy, as mentioned in the report, is an interesting recommendation that, in our view, could be explored by the relevant regional organizations.

As we have learned from the situation in the Indian Ocean, piracy is a complex phenomenon that requires our regular and close attention. Encouraging better capacities, better knowledge and better coordination among the actors in the fight against piracy will prove to be a decisive contribution of the Security Council to regional stability and development.

Mr. Karev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe for presenting the Secretary-General's report (see S/2012/45) on the outcome of the United Nations assessment mission's visit to the Gulf of Guinea region. We would also like to thank Mr. Abdel Fatau Musah and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga for the information they provided.

The Secretary-General's report confirms that the piracy threat in West Africa is far from being a myth. There have already been human casualties. We were shocked by the recent report of the death at the hand of local pirates of the captain of a vessel who was a citizen of China. In that regard, there is sufficient cause for alarm. Of course, the situation has not yet gotten as far out of hand as it has in the Horn of Africa region. However, if adequate measures are not taken now to address the issue, the problem could get out of hand.

We agree with the basic conclusion of the report to the effect that the region's States and the major regional organizations should take the lead in addressing the problem. In that regard, we welcome the joint efforts of Benin and Nigeria, along with the initiatives of the Economic Community of Western African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. We support the early convening of a regional summit on the problem of piracy in order develop integrated anti-piracy strategies.

The specific character of the pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea demands that instruments be identified to prevent them. First and foremost, that means strengthening control over coastlines by national coast guards of the region, organizing joint patrols, coordinating activities and exchanging of operational information. Provided that they are implemented in a timely and effective way, we believe that such measures will suffice to adequately resolve the problem.

Unlike the situation off the coast of Somalia, it is a promising sign that those activities will be undertaken by States with established State mechanisms and with trained armies and naval forces, as well as with normally functioning legal and law enforcement bodies that are capable of independently pursuing and prosecuting pirates. In that regard, we believe that the role of the international community is to provide the necessary material and technical support to the States of the region, primarily by equipping and training specialists from their coast-guard services. We agree that the United Nations can play a decisive coordinating role, in addition to helping to mobilize international financial resources to combat the threat of piracy.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for arranging and presiding over this meeting. Many thanks also to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Mr. Abdul Fatau Musah of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga of the Gulf of Guinea Commission for their briefings.

As we said in the Chamber during the debate (see S/PV.6717) on peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel held on 21 February, the United Kingdom welcomes the Security Council's focus on threats to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Piracy and armed robbery at sea significantly impact the security of both coastal and landlocked States in the region. Such activities, especially when linked to the trafficking in narcotics, people and weapons, to illegal fishing, oil bunkering and the prevention of international trade, pose a threat to regional peace and security. They also hamper economic development. It is important that such threats to maritime security be addressed in order to harness the benefits that can be delivered by a secure maritime domain. The United Kingdom welcomes Togo's leadership on this issue.

The year 2011 saw a significant increase in the volume and impact of armed robbery and piracy incidents in the Gulf of Guinea, as we have heard. The United Kingdom is extremely concerned about that increase in the number and frequency of attacks, as well as by their increasingly violent nature. Earlier this month, three attacks occurred in just four days, resulting in the deaths of two seafarers. The shipping industry, too, is rightly troubled by those incidents. It is unacceptable for innocent seafarers to face the risk of violent attack and death while transiting that area.

In the past year, incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea have spread along the coast and further out to sea, including some evidence of the use of mother ships. That is a regional problem, not one that is limited to the territorial waters of Nigeria and Benin. It is in the interest of all States in the region to work together in the shared goal of preventing further destabilization.

States of the region could of course harness considerable benefits by creating a secure maritime domain. We therefore urge States of the region to declare their exclusive economic zones. That will afford States the authority to enforce their national laws, including those related to fishing, protecting the environment, including from the dumping of waste, and armed robbery at sea. It will also enable national control over all economic resources within the exclusive economic zones, including with regard to ocean life, mining and oil exploration.

In that regard, we encourage States to continue to coordinate on maritime activity, both domestically and regionally, as well as with the United Nations Office for West Africa. It is important that action be taken now to prevent the situation from further deteriorating. We hope that West African heads of State will be able to prioritize activities to tackle the range of maritime security threats facing their countries.

The United Kingdom strongly welcomes the leadership shown by ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States to work together on maritime security off the coast of West Africa. We also warmly welcome the industry-led initiative to create a maritime trade information-sharing centre, following the example of the Maritime Security Centre (Horn of Africa) website, which has to be proved very valuable in tackling piracy off the coast of Somalia.

This is a timely and important debate, and I am grateful for Togo's leadership on this issue.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, let me join others in commending you, Sir, and your delegation for organizing this meeting on an issue that is becoming a major threat to maritime navigation, trade and economic activities in the Gulf of Guinea. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing and for introducing the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations assessment mission on the subject (see S/2012/45). I would also like to place on record our appreciation to

the representatives of the Gulf of Guinea Commission and of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their valuable statements.

The problem of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea was first discussed by the Security Council during the Indian presidency of the Council in August last year. Since then, there have been several new acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the problem has assumed more serious proportions. Its impact is felt increasingly by all littoral States, and its seriousness is demonstrated by the participation of a number of delegations in today's debate. I thank all participants for sharing their assessments with us.

The piracy off both coasts of Africa illustrates the degree of instability prevalent in the region and the reach of organized terrorist and criminal groups. They are targeting oil and chemical vessels, as well as oil drilling platforms, in the Gulf of Guinea and perpetrating severe violence against their captives. The region produces more than 5 million barrels of oil per day and three-quarters of the world's supply of cocoa. Pirate attacks are thus adversely affecting the emerging oil industry of the region, as well as commercial shipping and mariners.

The Secretary-General's report states that piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is already causing an annual economic loss of $2 billion, which is a significant amount when compared to the annual gross domestic products of the countries of the region. As regional stakeholders have said in their statements today, a large number of unemployed young people are becoming attracted to the business of piracy and maritime robbery.

The evolving business model of piracy involves low cost and risk, but yields high returns. While such socio-economic issues as poverty and unemployment may be abetting piracy, the main causes have to do with the limited institutional capacity of the countries in the region. Addressing problems such as the proliferation of weapons, poor naval infrastructure, and weak law enforcement and prosecution systems must become an integral part of counter-piracy efforts. Otherwise, like piracy off the coast of Somalia, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea can quickly assume the intensity and proportion of an organized cartel in the countries of western Africa.

India has been at the forefront of highlighting the menace of piracy off the coast of Somalia and stressing the urgent need for the international community to work towards a comprehensive counter-piracy strategy. India is also concerned about the surge in piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, including its economic and social costs. While the two situations are quite different in proportion at this stage, it is quite possible that the failure of the international community to act decisively against piracy off the coast of Somalia could have spawned a new surge in piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

The time has now come for the Council's attention to addressing the problem of piracy to be translated into a concrete plan of action. It being a regional problem, the action taken to address it must involve the full cooperation of the international community, led by the United Nations, with the countries of West Africa and regional and subregional organizations. In that connection, we welcome some of the steps that have been taken, such as the establishment of a subregional coastguard network in West and Central Africa, the formulation of the maritime security strategy of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the establishment of the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa, and the creation of the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa.

These initiatives have helped create a platform for Governments to formulate a collective approach to the problem. Also, the ECCAS maritime security strategy has yielded positive results in the zone comprising Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe. These efforts should be intensified and should include joint counter-piracy efforts ranging from patrolling and surveilling coastal waters to sharing information and intelligence and building the capacities of naval forces. In addition, it is also critical to strengthen the legal system to ensure effective and expeditious prosecution.

Greater coherence among the regional States and organizations will help to support the full and sustained implementation of these efforts. In that connection, we welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to facilitate a regional summit of Heads of State. The United Nations should also assist in the mobilization of resources. United Nations agencies in the region, particularly the United Nations Office for West Africa, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Maritime Organization, have an important

role to play in regional counter-piracy efforts and in addressing the related problems of terrorism, the illicit trafficking of drugs and the proliferation of weapons, which all conspire together to destabilize the region.

In conclusion, India stands ready to contribute to international efforts aimed at increasing the effective cooperation among States in the region in tackling the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Sir, and your delegation for organizing this important discussion. We thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, for his informative briefing on the report of the assessment mission on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea (see S/2012/45). We also thank Mr. Musah and Mrs. Ukonga for their statements on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, respectively.

At a time of global financial and economic hardship, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has severe financial and security implications for the States concerned and diverts important financial resources from key national development and socio-economic priorities to maritime security. The economic loss to the region of West Africa that results from the scourge of piracy is estimated to be $2 billion per annum.

South Africa welcomes the comprehensive report of the assessment mission on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The report highlights the cost and economic impact of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the numerous strategies implemented at the country, bilateral and various subregional levels to fight the scourge. We welcome these concrete actions as a demonstration of political will by the leaders of the region to combat piracy.

We share the concern and observation of the assessment mission that the growing evidence of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea constitutes yet another major threat to the peace, security and the economic interests of the countries of the region. The region has seen an increase in the number of attacks in recent months, and the violent nature of these attacks has brought greater attention to the growing problem of piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of West Africa.

The Secretary-General's report correctly draws attention to the fact that no country in the region appears to have the capacity to tackle maritime insecurity alone. We therefore commend the efforts already made by the affected countries, including the joint patrols by Nigeria and Benin in the region. However, these patrols in themselves are not sustainable and more needs to be done. The ongoing efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to address the threat of piracy are also commendable.

It is clear that numerous gaps exist at the national and regional levels, and we welcome the very practical and useful recommendations to address the scourge of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. They include, among others, the strengthening of national legal frameworks and of the capacities of States' criminal justice systems, integrated and coordinated regional responses to maritime security challenges, and international support to the States of the region. South Africa reiterates its view that piracy cannot be tackled in isolation and underscores the importance of addressing the phenomenon of piracy in a comprehensive manner that includes combating transnational crime and responding to the root causes of the challenge, such as youth unemployment.

It is clear from the report that the countries of the region lack adequate resources and capacity to alone address the issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea. We therefore welcome the intention of ECOWAS, ECCAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to convene a summit of Gulf of Guinea heads of State and Government in order to develop a comprehensive anti-piracy strategy that will assist the countries in the region to develop their capacities to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea. In that regard, we encourage the countries in the region to assert their ownership of the problem and take a leadership role in combating piracy. We look forward to their recommendations in that regard.

We call on the international community and the relevant United Nations agencies to provide the necessary support for that regional initiative and related efforts, including through the provision of financial and technical assistance. For its part, South Africa stands ready to assist the countries affected by the scourge of piracy in the West Africa region to the best of its abilities.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's

meeting to address the growing problem of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. I also welcome the presence of Mr. Lynn Pascoe here today and thank him for his briefing on the issue. I am also grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (see S/2012/45), which both contains the results of the United Nations assessment mission and forms the basis for today's debate. We also express thanks for the briefings that were made by Mr. Abdel Fatau Musah and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga.

The mission to which I have just referred was needed in order to assess the extent of the threat of piracy and evaluate the national and regional capacity to safeguard maritime security in the region. We take note of the recommendations contained in the report and believe that efforts at the national, regional and international levels are necessary in order to address and fight the phenomenon of piracy.

The Gulf of Guinea is home to countries that have abundant natural resources and basic goods. Those resources and their trade represent the livelihoods and source of employment for millions of people, and they will not cease to be an attractive target for criminal acts until a strategy to fight against them is put in place.

The growing number of recorded cases of armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea constitutes unequivocal evidence that the problem must be addressed with holistic initiatives and strategies of a regional nature. Special attention must be given to countries such as Benin because, due to the intense fight against piracy initiated by neighbouring countries, the problem has spread to the most vulnerable countries of the region. That is why efforts such as the joint maritime patrols being carried out by Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon and Chad can potentially serve to share the burden and fight the scourge effectively.

The fight against the phenomena of transnational organized crime, armed robbery at sea and piracy surpasses the national capacity of affected countries to eradicate them. It is therefore both a threat to the stability of the entire region as well as a collective responsibility. The response to those threats jeopardizes socio-economic development, international trade and foreign investment in the region.

In addition, we echo what was said by the representative of the Gulf of Guinea Commission on the necessity for the Security Council to use more precise terminology, since the Council has sometimes used the terms "piracy" and "armed robbery at sea" as if they were interchangeable. When piratical acts are committed within the territorial waters of a State, they are not qualified as piracy under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, but instead as armed robbery at sea. The report before us suggests that we are mostly dealing with the latter. We therefore believe that greater attention should be paid to the precise context and circumstances of each situation, as well as to standards shared by all the countries in the region.

The expected regional summit of the States of the Gulf of Guinea on piracy should receive all the necessary support from the international community, as it has the potential to jumpstart and accelerate the efforts and different initiatives in order to better coordinate the procedures that the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are endeavouring to set up. The goodwill and readiness of the affected countries to address the threat is not in question, but the lack of resources for implementing those various initiatives and the weakness of institutions are indeed worrying.

The lessons learned and best practices that may arise from the ECCAS maritime security strategy can help the initiatives put forward by ECOWAS to be more on point and more effective in the fight against piracy and in achieving the needed maritime security, despite the lack of existing resources.

We believe that the Gulf of Guinea Commission should be composed of more West African countries in order to fulfil its goal of serving as a bridge between both economic communities. We invite ECOWAS and ECCAS to continue their efforts to work together and formulate the broad and integrated regional strategy needed to fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, in close collaboration and coordination with the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa.

We believe that all progress must be made on the basis of the memorandum of understanding on the establishment of a subregional integrated coast-guard network in West and Central Africa. That memorandum serves as the basis for the national and regional action plans that should be drawn up by the States of the region in order to expeditiously implement the creation

of the subregional integrated coast-guard network in West and Central Africa.

Finally, the threat that the problem poses to the stability of the affected countries and to the potential for trade in those countries to bring about economic development and the subsequent eradication of poverty is a cause for concern. We agree with the Secretary-General that the fight against piracy must not be limited to attacking the problem at sea. Efforts must be made to address the underlying causes that generally arise on land. Although we acknowledge that progress has been made in the ongoing discussions in the region and we recognize that assistance from the United Nations and the international community is needed, we believe that concrete steps must be taken, such as the holding of the regional summit of States of the Gulf of Guinea on piracy and the continuation of the joint maritime patrols.

In conclusion, my delegation is ready to contribute to international efforts to implement effective cooperation among States in tackling the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by thanking Togo, on Morocco's behalf, for having taken the initiative to convene this debate, thus completing the general overview of the situation in West Africa with today's focus on the Gulf of Guinea. Your presence, Mr. Minister, and that of the Minister of Defence of Benin clearly demonstrate the importance that the two brother nations represented attach to this debate. I also wish to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his clear and concise briefing on the important assessment work undertaken by the United Nations in the countries affected by piracy in that maritime region. The light shed by the representatives of the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission is very useful to our discussions.

In solidarity with the threatened countries, in recent years my country has continued to alert the international community to the developments and threats posed by the phenomenon of piracy in that region. It is quite logical that Morocco should welcome with satisfaction the work undertaken by the United Nations assessment mission that visited Benin, Nigeria, Gabon and Angola in December 2011 to evaluate the scope of the challenges posed by that scourge in the region. We are extremely interested in the follow-up to the report drawn up by that mission (see S/2012/45).

The impact of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is no longer just a security matter, but also a trade and economic issue. International shipping, international maritime trade and energy security, as well as the economies of the coastal and landlocked countries of the region, are significantly and worryingly affected by that alarming phenomenon. The first observation of the assessment mission's report is that many States of the region have difficulties in terms of their capacities to effectively combat the phenomenon. The second observation is that, to date, the various subregional cooperation mechanisms have been unable to bring tangible, satisfactory and lasting responses to that scourge. We therefore support the assessment mission's recommendations concerning national and regional responses to the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

In terms of the capacities of States of the region, we believe that the United Nations system is in a position to play a key role in helping States, in particular with the assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, to develop their capacities and their national strategy to combat piracy and transnational organized crime, including the drawing up of a national legal framework that makes it possible to charge and try alleged perpetrators of acts of piracy and to promote cross-border judicial and security cooperation.

The material, technical or financial contribution of several bilateral partners seeking to support the countries of the region, from whom we have received very clear and precise information this morning, must be commended. We support its continuation and strengthening, as well as the exchange of good practices among countries of the region.

With regard to regional cooperation, my country has invested a great deal in establishing and strengthening cross-regional cooperation among the African Atlantic coastal States in order to meet the challenges posed by that ocean. My country welcomes the political decision taken by the countries of the region to convene a regional summit among the presidencies of the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. That meeting will provide the opportunity to develop an in-depth dialogue and cooperation mechanism at the

interregional level between the two subregional organizations and with the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa. More precisely, it will enable the countries of the region to establish a comprehensive cross-regional cooperation mechanism, facilitating exchanges and the pooling of efforts to make that region more secure.

We agree with the report's recommendation on the need to strengthen the regional security architecture and to ensure a greater balance between the mechanisms of Central Africa and West Africa.

Any measure seeking to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea will be sustainable only if the underlying causes allowing the spread of that scourge are also addressed. In that regard, it is crucial to include in any anti-piracy strategy elements linked to strengthening institutions responsible for implementing the rule of law and the fight against transnational organized crime, as well as development issues in particular.

All challenges posed not only by piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, but also by transnational organized crime and terrorism in West and Central Africa, must also be addressed and considered in the context of a comprehensive strategy. The international community must focus on the connection and ties among the various criminal and terrorist networks that are increasingly destabilizing the African continent. As Council members know, the awareness of that connection has led the ministers responsible for shipping and port activities of the Ministerial Conference of Atlantic Coastal States to hold talks in Libreville since May 2011 on cooperation to secure their infrastructure and to protect merchant shipping from such threats.

The adoption of resolution 2018 (2011) is an important landmark in the debate on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. It is essential that the international community continue to pay particular attention to that matter and support the States of the region in combating the scourge. For its part, Morocco will continue, together with you, Mr. President, and our friends of South Africa, to keep this challenge at the heart of the Security Council's interest. Finally, my delegation would like to indicate its full support for the draft resolution on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, submitted by your country.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): In expressing my appreciation for the convening of this important discussion, I would also like to thank Mr. Abdel Fatau Musah and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga for their briefings and Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his important comments on the report of the Secretary-General on the assessment mission on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea (see S/2012/45).

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea region affect the security of international shipping and threaten the trade and economic development of the countries of the region. Piracy affects not only coastal States, but also landlocked countries that depend on access to the sea for their imports and exports. According to the report, piracy results in an annual loss of about $2 billion to the economy of the West African subregion.

The problem of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea cannot be tackled in a unilateral or isolated manner. All affected countries should combine their efforts to avoid the success of one country resulting in piracy activities relocating to more vulnerable countries.

For that reason, any lasting and effective solution must include genuine, coordinated regional and international efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy aimed at strengthening the capacities of the countries in the region in the fight against that crime.

Piracy attacks in the Gulf of Guinea are neither opportunistic nor isolated events. Quite the contrary, there is increasing evidence that piracy activity is systematic and organized. Therefore, precise, detailed and verified data on the scope, modalities and specific zones of the incidents is necessary in order to form a better idea of the character and nature of the phenomenon before us and develop initiatives adapted to the particularities of each case.

The international community should support the efforts of States of the region in exercising their sovereign responsibility to fight piracy. In that regard, it is essential to maintain the leadership role of the States concerned in applying solutions against that scourge.

Technical assistance for strengthening legislative and judiciary systems in fighting this crime is of major importance. Equally important are the exchange of

information and the establishment of a framework to gather, analyse and disseminate information. At the same time, technical, material and financial support must be provided towards building capacities in the maritime security sector of various States of the region.

We believe that any lasting and effective solution to the problem of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea requires the implementation of a regional approach to maritime security that includes the various initiatives developed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the participation of the African Union.

As is the case in other situations considered by the Council, a viable response to that crime should include factors identified by the assessment mission, such as high rates of youth unemployment, wide income disparity within society, the uncontrolled circulation of illegal weapons and the prevalence of corruption.

Colombia supports the early convening of a regional summit of heads of State of the Gulf of Guinea, as an appropriate forum to further develop a broad regional strategy to combat piracy. In that regard, the United Nations is called upon to provide assistance to national authorities and regional organizations in relation to the matter and to coordinate international assistance in support of regional efforts aimed at fighting that crime.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his very useful briefing, as well as the United Nations assessment mission on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea for its report (see S/2012/45). I equally thank Mr. Abdel Fatau Musah of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Her Excellency Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga of the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea (CGG) for their contributions.

In addressing the scope of the threat of piracy in the region, the report confirms an alarming situation. Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea have risen and pose a growing threat to economic development and security for the States in the region and beyond. In that regard, let me focus briefly on two points, namely, the need for a comprehensive, integrated approach to maritime security and the importance of enhanced coordination among the affected States and regional organizations.

First, in order to increase maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, an integrated concept is required. Questions about how to prevent piracy and how to combat it, as well as the political and legal framework of dealing with pirates and their supporting networks, need to be tackled. An effective approach will rely very much on the affected States' capacities to deploy well-trained and well-equipped security forces as well as competent judicial institutions, both acting according to principles of the rule of law. A comprehensive approach should adequately address the immediate threat, while at the same time deal with the root causes and conditions conducive to the growth in piracy and armed robbery. Where applicable, lessons learned from fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia should be taken into account.

My second point relates to the significance of regional leadership. In that regard, we welcome the initiatives taken by States of the region and regional organizations such as ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea. Those include adoption of the ECCAS strategy on maritime security; the creation of the ECOWAS subcommittee on maritime security; and the preparatory steps taken by ECOWAS towards developing an integrated maritime security strategy, and the increased cooperation between ECCAS and ECOWAS.

In that regard, we strongly encourage ECOWAS, ECCAS and the CGG to work on the organization of the joint summit at which they intend to develop a coherent regional anti-piracy strategy. Cooperation and coordination among the affected countries, as well as with and among the regional organizations, including the African Union, need to be further enhanced.

The international community, including the United Nations and its regional offices — the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Office for West Africa — should support those efforts. The European Union started to focus on the issue in 2010, and is carrying out projects that aim in particular to support the capacities of ECOWAS and ECCAS and cooperation with the International Maritime Organization. Germany will continue to be engaged in building capacities of the affected States and regional organizations in order to

tackle the challenge of piracy, which undermines the security and economic development of the region.

My delegation supports the draft resolution that is currently being negotiated, as well as its swift adoption.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Togo.

Togo is pleased by the fact that this Security Council debate on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is taking place just a few days after the meeting of the Council that was devoted to the impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region (see S/PV.6717), over which Togo's Head of State personally presided. Today's debate therefore represents the determination of the Security Council to provide the necessary responses to the new threats to peace and security that the States in the region of the Gulf of Guinea now face.

Before continuing, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing to the Council on the issue under discussion. I also wish to again express my country's gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his excellent initiative in deploying, last November, to those countries directly affected, a United Nations assessment mission on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

The observations contained in the report of the assessment mission (see S/2012/45) perfectly illustrate the gravity of the threat posed by piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. For Togo, those observations inform the Security Council on the alarming nature of the situation. At the same time, they justify our serious concern about the implications of the threat on peace, security, stability and the economic development of the region. Those concerns are exacerbated by the ever-clearer links between piracy and other forms of organized crime in the region, as was stressed during the 21 February debate to which I just referred. Indeed, the statistics contained in the report show that from 2010 to 2011 there was an alarming increase in the number of attacks in the West African sector of the Gulf of Guinea. The Republic of Benin, which is suffering the consequences of that increase, has witnessed a precipitous drop in activity in the port of Cotonou. The considerable financial losses suffered by the country are clear evidence of the disastrous impact of piracy on the economies and the strengthening of economic governance in the region.

In order to address that grave situation, the States of the Gulf of Guinea have taken joint initiatives to deal with the scourge, including in particular the programme known as Operation Prosperity, under which joint patrols are being carried out by the Nigerian and Beninese security forces off the coast of Benin.

Nationally, and in order to strengthening its legal arsenal in that respect, the National Assembly authorized the Government of Togo last November to ratify the international Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, of 10 March 1988. Furthermore, the building of national actors' capacities to combat piracy enabled the Togolese navy, on 8 February, to repel a pirate attack against a Panamanian vessel.

At the regional level, the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) have established a comprehensive maritime security framework: the West African Regional Maritime Security Centre. In addition, the States concerned have adopted a funding mechanism whereby they pool their maritime taxes into a single community tax so as to finance maritime security.

We also welcome the determination reiterated by the heads of State of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), during the summit held on 27 and 28 January last, to enhance cooperation with the Gulf of Guinea Commission and all stakeholders in order to combat piracy.

Togo believes that, while we await the holding of the conference of heads of State and Government of the States of the Gulf of Guinea, these approaches should be supported and encouraged in order to promote exchanges of information and experience. However, as is made clear in the report of the Secretary-General, despite the resolve of those States and their efforts to eradicate piracy, on an individual basis or within the framework of bilateral cooperation, our countries' national and regional capacities are insufficient to allow them to alone effectively put an end to or even contain that threat.

It is therefore imperative that a collective approach to the problem be taken in order to prevent this evil, once addressed at the national or subregional

level in the Gulf of Guinea area, from spreading elsewhere. The increase in the number of pirate attacks off the coast of Benin, even as that number has begun to diminish off the coast of Nigeria, makes clear the importance of international support in helping to deal with this scourge.

It also goes without saying that piracy in the Gulf of Guinea poses a threat not only to the countries of the region but also to international trade and seagoing staff, some of whom are from other regions of the world. Hence the combat against piracy requires joint efforts on the part of all regions and cannot be left to the countries of the Gulf of Guinea to deal with alone.

Togo wishes to commend and encourage the various forms of support provided to Benin and other countries of the subregion by various partners, including France, the United States of America, China, the European Union and INTERPOL, to enhance their capacity in the field of maritime security.

My country believes that given what is at stake, the international community has a very important role to play. That is why we endorse the proposal that the United Nations encourage the countries of the region to take the measures necessary to mobilize international support for the activities being carried out in the region and help coordinate international assistance, particularly for the implementation of a comprehensive strategy.

The upcoming adoption by the Security Council of the second draft resolution on the issue of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea reflects the commitment of the United Nations and that of the international community as a whole to working with resolve to combat maritime piracy jointly with the States of the Gulf of Guinea.

Togo reiterates its sincere thanks to the members of the Security Council for their contributions in that regard and hopes that the implementation of the aforementioned resolution will help to resolve the problem.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Benin.

Mr. N'Douro (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to warmly congratulate you once again, Sir, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February 2012. My country, Benin, welcomes the particular attention that the Security Council, under the presidency of Togo, is devoting to security problems in Africa, as security is an essential precondition for the sustainable development of our countries.

Mr. President, I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Ambassador of South Africa, for his outstanding leadership during his term and for the praiseworthy results achieved for both the international community in general and for Africa and its strategic partnership with the United Nations. I also pay tribute to the contributions made by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe; the representative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Abdel Musah; and Mrs. Florentina Ukonga, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission.

Last Tuesday, in this very Chamber, the President of the Republic of Togo, His Excellency Faure Gnassingbé, personally led a high-level debate on transnational organized crime in West Africa and the Sahel region (see S/PV.6717). The objective was to identify the synergies necessary to wage a comprehensive war against this faceless enemy, which is inflicting such suffering on the extremely vulnerable countries of that region of the African continent.

Today's debate, during which the Council is considering the report (see S/2012/45) of the assessment mission dispatched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the countries of the Gulf of Guinea, in particular to my country, Benin, is a logical follow-up to the debate of 21 February 2012 on transnational organized crime. Indeed, those two phenomena are closely interrelated, in terms of both their modus operandi and their very nature. They represent a real challenge to the Governments of the region in the exercise of their sovereign functions.

The Government of Benin aligns itself with the conclusions of the United Nations assessment mission. We agree with the analysis contained in the report under consideration, which eloquently sets out the links among transnational organized crime, piracy and armed robbery at sea. These phenomena are fuelled by rock-solid criminal solidarity combining lucrative fraudulent activities, such as oil bunkering and trafficking in children, cocaine, counterfeit medicines and cigarettes.

In 2011 alone, 21 attacks were reported on vessels off the coast of Benin. From January to October of that year, 58 maritime attacks were carried out off the coast of West Africa, including 18 in Nigeria, seven in Togo, two in Ghana and one in Côte d'Ivoire. These attacks have dire political, economic, environmental and security consequences for our countries. Pirate attacks are disastrous for the security and economies of the Gulf of Guinea region in general, and in particular for the activities of the autonomous Port of Cotonou, which is the economic lung of Benin. Indeed, the economy of Benin depends to a large extent on the fees and transit permits raised from the autonomous Port of Cotonou. The port's activities represent 70 per cent of the country's gross national product; they generate 80 per cent of the revenue of a national budget that depends on tax income and represent 90 per cent of trade with the interior. The autonomous Port of Cotonou is a natural port for the landlocked countries of the hinterland — Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad — which engage in the export and import of their products there.

Since the first attacks recorded off the coast of Benin, the number of vessels entering the Port has fallen by 70 per cent and insurance premiums have soared. In the face of the doubling of insurance premiums, a number of vessels have decided not to use the Port of Cotonou, whereas the revenue drawn from the Port is essential to ensuring the functioning of the State of Benin. The situation has arisen at a time when we had been hoping to see dividends from the major investments made to modernize the Port's infrastructure, with the assistance of the United States of America within the framework of the Millennium Challenge Account.

The President of the Republic of Benin, Mr. Boni Yayi, therefore acted speedily to alert the international community and the Security Council to the issue of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. I am pleased to report that Benin's appeals for assistance received a prompt and useful response from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council through the adoption of resolution 2018 (2011). The dispatch of the United Nations assessment mission to the field has allowed us to identify the measures necessary to design and implement a coherent national and regional strategy.

National and bilateral efforts have been stepped up to address the scourge. I should like to highlight in particular the positive impact of the joint patrols conducted by the navies of Nigeria and Benin off the coast of Benin. The joint patrols are a component of Operation Prosperity, launched on 28 September 2011. Four hundreds sorties have been carried out, including 316 by the Benin navy. The sorties represent 3,668 hours at sea, of which 1,278 have been conducted by the Benin navy.

In the context of the Operation, the Chief of Staff divided part of Benin's coastline into holding areas for vessels, which are invited to drop anchor close to the coast in an area that is accessible to the patrol boats participating in the Operation. This measure has allowed them to be grouped together in order to ensure their greater security. These measures are supported by enhanced joint patrols conducted 24 hours a day close to the anchorages. Similarly, a permanent radar and radio watch has been established, allowing immediate responses to distress calls. Since the operation was launched, no further has been reported in the territorial waters of Benin.

Beyond these very expensive joint patrols, the Government of Benin has made substantial efforts, drawing on its own domestic resources, to enhance its naval capacities, with the support of its partners and in particular France, the United States of America, the European Union and China. Other Member States, including the Netherlands, have indicated their intention to provide support. Through me, the Government of Benin expresses its deep gratitude for their active and spontaneous solidarity.

A second semaphore system has been installed, complementing the existing semaphore in Cotonou. It allows us to sweep the entire coast of Benin and a good part of the Togolese coast. With the deployment in March 2012 by the Government of Benin of patrol ships commanded by the Benin naval forces, 10 to 15 people will be able to patrol the high seas 24 hours a day over a 10-day period to dissuade attacks on vessels off our coast. Benin is also implementing an import-control programme aimed at ensuring the effective control of cargoes by scanning containers, which will also ensure transparency in the handling of maritime cargo and limit the opportunities for malfeasance during customs formalities. Furthermore, we have established a canine brigade of sniffer dogs to detect drugs, explosives and all other forms of contraband subject to piracy and armed robbery at sea.

With the help of the United States of America, the Government of Benin has formulated and enacted a national maritime security and safety strategy, which will promote the growth and development of the maritime economy, allow for the free movement of persons and goods along major strategic maritime routes off our coasts, enhance security in ports and port installations, and combat illicit transnational activities and maritime crime, such as armed robbery in territorial waters and piracy on the high seas.

The strategy is supported by a participatory approach involving all stakeholders in its formulation. It is based on the following measures: the definition of measures to protect the coasts; the delimitation of maritime borders and the establishment of partnerships with neighbouring countries; the involvement of strategic partners in the training of human resources and the provision of the logistical support necessary to strengthen our national capacities; and the enhancement of our cooperation with the United Nations and bilateral partners to safeguard the free movement of persons and goods through that important maritime route.

Efforts are under way at the regional level, as represented by the meeting of experts from ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), organized in January in Abuja to consider the draft integrated regional strategy for maritime security and safety. The meeting set the stage for the regional economic communities to play a leading role in coordinating efforts to combat maritime threats in the Gulf of Guinea, in line with the integrated maritime strategy adopted by the African Union. The Abuja meeting took place in the context of the preparations for the regional summit mentioned in resolution 2018 (2011). A second meeting of ECOWAS and ECCAS experts will be held in Cotonou in March.

Benin welcomes France's decision to support the efforts to be made by Benin, Togo and Ghana to preserve maritime security along their coasts. The support will be provided through an initial €800 million in funding, which France has put at the disposal of our three countries in combating maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Combating maritime piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea entails significant stakes. Maritime insecurity poses a threat to the exclusive right of coastal States to comprehensively exercise sovereignty over their territorial waters. That also serves to underscore the need for clearly delimiting borders. In addition to those basic political requirements, we must also not underestimate what is at stake economically.

The Gulf of Guinea is an extremely important maritime route for international trade. The area is estimated to contain enormous petroleum resources, which are now estimated at 14 billion barrels. That, along with its natural gas deposits and fishing resources, makes this a first-rate strategic zone for the global economy.

Fishing resources continue to be subject to unchecked poaching owing to illegal undeclared fishing. That represents an annual loss of $20 billion to the countries of the Gulf of Guinea, according to a study published in 2007 by the Food and Agriculture Organization.

We fear that, if the region's public authorities are not able to carry out their functions consistently, the growing number of oil companies, along with their increasing activities in the region, could lead to a global environmental catastrophe.

Ensuring security in the Gulf of Guinea is essential to promoting investment and restarting development for the countries of the region, making it a dynamic area for renewal and growth at the global level.

There is a need for the international community to respond, while there is still time, to the new threats affecting the region by piracy and armed robbery at sea. There is also a need to face the problems posed by junked ships and decommissioned vessels abandoned along our coasts, which provide transit points for criminal groups, pirates and all sorts of traffickers. I should like to draw the Council's attention to a threat report prepared by our navy's Chief of Staff, which has been transmitted to the Council.

There are currently a dozen abandoned vessels along Benin's coasts. Their existence is a genuine threat to Benin, which has neither the means nor the necessary expertise to deal with them. I should like here to urgently appeal to our partners to help us to get rid of these ships that, above and beyond threatening security, pose a major risk of pollution. Several of those vessels harbour toxic substances, which have already produced victims among some of the people in their vicinity.

The threats to the Gulf of Guinea are enormous and pose a threat as well to international peace and security. They should be addressed as such by the international community, which would benefit from developing an anticipatory approach to contain the damage.

The international community should resolutely support the efforts of the countries of the Gulf of Guinea to control piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. Relenting in those efforts will have an immediate and direct effect on the frequency and ferocity of such attacks.

Benin believes that combating this scourge call for resources that are largely beyond our reach. We therefore hope that the Security Council, which very early on grasped the real scope of this threat, will adopt the recommendations contained in the assessment mission's report before it, with a view to scrupulously implementing them at both the national and regional levels as part of a commitment to synergistic efforts to combat damaging activities to maritime safety and security. The stability of our countries is at stake.

The President: I thank Minister of State N'Douro for his eloquent and instructive statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Congo.

Mr. Balé (Congo) (*spoke in French*): On 21 February, the Security Council held an open debate (see S/PV.6717) on the impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region. Today, the Togolese presidency has convened another debate on peace and security in Africa, this time to consider the problem of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. We welcome this timely decision, which places the issue of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea in the context of the logical extension of last week's debate from a perspective that should lead to a concerted, comprehensive approach to this threat to peace and security in this part of the African continent.

While there may not seem to be any links between the subject of the two debates, last Tuesday's debate showed that transnational crime and piracy — the latter being one manifestation of the former — is largely fuelled by the illicit circulation of weapons and narcotics, large-scale armed banditry and illegal immigration.

The report of the Secretary-General (see S/2012/45) on the assessment mission, whose relevance I commend, highlights the main characteristics of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. It also helps us to better grapple with this problem as part of a dynamic approach involving the other security challenges largely besetting African countries, in particular those of the Gulf of Guinea. The report specifically points to the threats to the vital interests of our countries and to our responses to those security challenges.

The State of security in the Gulf of Guinea presents various challenges to peace and stability in the region. Threats stemming from uncontrolled industrial-scale overfishing, the insecurity provoked by pirates and that surrounding maritime navigation, and insecurity across borders all entail loss of human life, the taking of hostages, armed robbery, the destruction of economic infrastructure, diverting oil shipments, disturbances to maritime trade and even environmental hazards at oil installations. While their consequences are quite clear, they do not provide a full picture of the effects of such criminal actions, especially on community policies and on neighbouring countries lacking a coastline.

A reading of the assessment mission's report leaves one with the impression that there is a need for and effective functional synergy between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) aimed at combating maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The Gulf of Guinea Commission should act as the link between the two organizations. In that regard, we welcome the meeting held in Abuja, as well as the one scheduled to take place next March. I would like to limit my statement to ECCAS member States of the Gulf of Guinea and share with the Council their response in meeting the host of challenges, which could in the future give rise to broader efforts to the entire area of the Gulf of Guinea.

In 2009, ECCAS member States adopted a maritime security plan (SECMAR) to secure their vital interests at sea, to be implemented by the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa (CRESMAC), which is based in the coastal city of Pointe-Noire in the Congo. CRESMAC, which will serve as the future nerve centre for the Central African strategy to fight maritime piracy, has the main mission of ensuring ECCAS member States' control over the

maritime space. The implementation of SECMAR and CRESMAC's future operationalization reflect the undeniable leadership of our States in undertaking concerted, collective action this scourge.

It has been determined that an exceptional financial contribution of approximately $1.4 million is needed to launch CRESMAC and begin work in the three zones identified by the strategy. An ECCAS good-offices mission has been established to secure those funds. However, effectively operationalizing the Centre is still a challenge owing to the difficulties associated with its financing and functioning. In the meantime, the Multinational Coordination Centre of Douala has been called upon to fill the gaps as much as possible.

With the initial $600,000 in financing provided by the Congolese Government, construction is now under way to build CRESMAC's facilities on land that has been provided free of charge. The Republic of the Congo's individual involvement also extends to partial financing of equipment for the centre.

By 1963, when maritime piracy was not as widespread as it is today, Congolese law already qualified piracy as a crime under our merchant marine code. Congo's commitment to combat this scourge and all its ramifications has therefore been ongoing, both at the national and at the regional and international levels.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my Government's gratitude to the different bilateral and multilateral partners in support of our countries' individual and collective efforts to combat the scourge of maritime piracy. I call on them to continue their commitment in this undertaking, specifically by supporting ECCAS member States in their desire to effectively and immediately launch the activities of CRESMAC, which is a key link in the cooperation chain set up to fight maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Congo's support for the initiative to organize a summit on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, with the goal of putting in place a collective, comprehensive strategy to eradicate this scourge, reflects the legitimate and pressing aspirations for peace, security and stability for our peoples and States, without which our peoples could never work towards true and lasting development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): My first words must be to thank you immensely, Mr. President, for convening this timely debate on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Coming on the heels of the inaugural debate (see S/PV.6633) convened by Nigeria in October 2011, I believe that the holding of this meeting underscores both the enormity and intensity of the threat. It also reinforces the message that international attention must stay focused on this growing menace. I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his succinct briefing, as well as Mr. Abdel Fatau Musah and Ambassador Florentina Adenike Ukonga, for their insightful remarks.

The incidence of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has witnessed an alarming surge. Although underreported, it has become increasingly violent. Attacks, which were once almost exclusively confined to the coast, now range beyond the Gulf of Guinea. The Nigerian Maritime Security Task Force documented a total of 293 incidents of pirate attacks and robberies at sea between 2003 and 2008 — on fishing vessels alone.

The cost of piracy to local economies is staggering. For a region undergoing a post-conflict transition, the annual loss of $2 billion to the region's economy, from offshore oil, fishing and shipping, is too high a price to pay. Future investments in the West African oil industry face a clear and present danger. Indeed, the profitability of any new oil exploration taking place off the coast of Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and the Niger Delta is threatened. In broader terms, the shipping industry has been rendered vulnerable.

Let there be no doubt regarding the substantial political will at the subregional and regional levels in confronting this growing threat. The countries in the region are responding to the challenge by strengthening existing national initiatives. In recent times, mindful of the importance of joint efforts, they have created partnerships towards fostering an optimal regional approach to maritime security.

The Republic of Benin and Nigeria commenced a six-month pilot joint patrol programme along the coast of Benin on 28 September 2011. The programme, which is being conducted under Nigeria's tactical command and Benin's operational command, derives 95 per cent of its logistical support from Nigeria,

including the deployment of two helicopters, two maritime vessels and two interceptor boats. That collaboration has recorded some measure of success, and includes scope for broader participation. We believe that such a cooperative arrangement will benefit enormously from enhanced surveillance systems, patrol boats, maintenance capabilities, funding, joint coordination centres and information-sharing, within a legal framework that takes into account maritime domain awareness.

It is against that backdrop that we warmly welcome the Secretary-General's assessment mission to West Africa. The mission's report (see S/2012/45) calls for actions that build on resolution 2018 (2011), adopted in October 2011, as well as the Council's statement to the press of 30 August (see SC/10372). The findings and recommendations of the mission will form the bedrock for the development of a holistic approach in tackling this threat. They provide the impetus for concerted, bold and swift action, not only by countries of the region, but also by international partners.

Nigeria supports the draft resolution submitted by Togo. The next necessary steps to confront piracy in the Gulf of Guinea must involve the countries of the region working more concertedly. It must also involve greater collaboration between the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, with the support of both the United Nations Office for West Africa and the United National Regional Office for Central Africa.

Indeed, a comprehensive regional approach is now imperative. That is why we are committed to the convening of a regional summit to address the issue in a comprehensive manner, and we are glad to note that the initiative has received wide support. We are confident that the summit will explore fresh ideas and provide new directions that will engender further action by the Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. Before adjourning the meeting, I would like thank everyone for their active participation. I express those sentiments of gratitude on behalf of the President of Togo. Peace and security are the sine qua non conditions for the development of our respective countries.

The Security Council has thus concluded the current stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.